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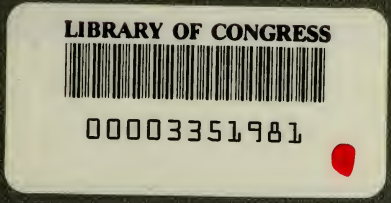

WHIPPLE TABLET PRESENTATION

BY SONS OF THE REVOLUTION OF THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

OCTOBER TWENTY-FOURTH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TEN

WHIPPLE TABLET PRESENTATION

By Sons of the Revolution of the State of New Hampshire

October 24, 1910

Concord, N. H.
The Rumford Press
1910

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Gift
The Society
JUL 28 1911

WILLIAM WHIPPLE,

Soldier and Statesman,

Born at Kittery, Me.,
January 14, 1730,

Died in Portsmouth, N. H.,
November 28, 1785.

Elected to Continental Congress in January, 1776.

He signed the Declaration of Independence.

As Brigadier-General of N. H. Troops he assisted in negotiating the terms of General Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1777.

He was Judge of the Superior Court.

Presented by N. H. Sons of the Revolution,
June, 1910.

WHIPPLE TABLET PRESENTATION

The Whipple School Building was built by the city of Portsmouth in 1888 on Mason's Hill, so called, on State Street opposite the former residence of the famous Jeremiah Mason from whom the hill takes its name.

At the request of many patriotic citizens, the building was named after Gen. William Whipple, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, who lived in Portsmouth on the westerly side of Market Street in what is now known as the Ladd mansion.

On November 20, 1891, an oil portrait of General Whipple was presented to the city of Portsmouth by Storer Post, Grand Army of the Republic, and a notable address on this occasion was given by Rear Admiral Joseph Foster, U. S. N., now retired. The portrait was hung in the principal's room in the Whipple School Building and is now there.

Recently four gentlemen of Portsmouth, all direct descendants of ancestors who fought in

the American Revolution, conceived the happy idea of presenting to the City in the name of the Sons of the Revolution of the State of New Hampshire, a bronze tablet in commemoration of William Whipple and his patriotic deeds, and placing this tablet at the main entrance to the school building.

These four gentlemen are,—

Marcus M. Collis
Stephen Decatur
Alfred Langdon Elwyn
Henry A. Yeaton

Marcus M. Collis is a direct descendant of John Collis, whose Revolutionary battles included Bunker Hill, Saratoga and the Rhode Island campaign.

Stephen Decatur is a direct descendant of the famous Commodore Stephen Decatur who was preëminent among those who fought on the sea for a new and struggling nation.

Alfred Langdon Elwyn is a direct descendant of Gov. John Langdon, one of the foremost among New Hampshire patriots, statesmen and warriors.

Henry A. Yeaton is a direct descendant of Moses Yeaton, whose revolutionary record shows that he was first a private, then a lieutenant, then a captain in the Revolutionary army.

The tablet was put in place on the Whipple School Building on October twenty fourth, 1910, at noon, in the presence of the school teachers of the city, many citizens and some six hundred pupils from the High and Whipple schools, all of whom were massed in State Street in front of the building.

The exercises were opened by the superintendent of schools, Mr. James A. McDougall, who introduced the Rev. Alfred Langdon Elwyn, who made the preliminary address. He was followed by John W. Kelley, Esq., of the New Hampshire bar, a native and resident of Portsmouth, who delivered the principal address. The mayor of the city, Mr. Edward H. Adams, accepted the tablet in behalf of the city, in well chosen words, and the exercises closed with the singing of "America" by all present.

PRESENTATION

Alfred Langdon Elwyn

Rev. Alfred Langdon Elwyn in presenting the tablet in behalf of the Sons of the Revolution spoke as follows:

I appear before you as a descendant of Governor John Langdon, who was ready to sacrifice himself and all he possessed to save his country from the British Parliament. He fitted out Gen. John Stark and fought under him in the battles of Bennington, Saratoga and Newport during the war of the Revolution. As one of the four members of the United States Senate from this state, Governor Langdon should have signed the Declaration of Independence, but the presiding officer, Hon. John Hancock sent him home to build a ship on his own island in the river Piscataqua. So his name does not appear with the other signers, Bartlett, Thornton and Whipple. As presiding officer of the Senate, he announced to General Washington he had the honor to announce to him his election as president of the United States, the country which he had fought for.

This tablet is presented by the Sons of the Revolution of the State of New Hampshire. The present membership consists of Alfred Langdon Elwyn, Marcus M. Collis, Henry A. Yeaton and Stephen Decatur.

ADDRESS ON WILLIAM WHIPPLE

John W. Kelley, Esq.

Yesterday the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America; and greater perhaps never was or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony "that these United States are and of right ought to be free and independent States." The day is passed. The Fourth of July 1776 will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these States, yet through all the gloom I can see the rays of light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means, and that posterity will triumph although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not.

So wrote home to his wife in Massachusetts, John Adams on the fifth day of July, 1776, of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Fifty-six patriots affixed their names to that wonderful declaration, all but eight of whom were

born in America. Of the eight, two were from England, three from Ireland, two from Scotland and one from Wales. Of the four delegates representing the New Hampshire colony or province one, Matthew Thornton of Londonderry, was born in Ireland; one, Josiah Bartlett, was born in Massachusetts; one, William Whipple, was born in Maine; and one John Langdon was born in New Hampshire. The latter, however, did not sign because at the time he was engaged in official duties that engaged him importantly elsewhere.

It is difficult without much study of contemporaneous history to get a proper viewpoint of the tremendous issues involved in signing and putting forth to the world this document. You should consider the thirteen colonies, their poverty, their lack of resources, their lack of cohesiveness. You must consider the lack of transportation facilities, the lack of ready and quick means of intercommunication, the strength of the Tories, the hostility of the Indian tribes, the wildness of the country, the greatness of the mother country in the world at large, and the strength of her army and navy in America. You must consider that the signing of such a document put the signers, in the eyes of the English nation, in the traitor and rebel class, each with a price upon his head, and shameless death his only portion if caught,

and a homeless wanderer if the colonial struggle turned against him.

In the words of another:

> They pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor; and not one was false to the pledge—not one. They suffered much; some died from hardships encountered; some were imprisoned; many were impoverished, and all were tempted by promises, and menaced by the wrath of what seemed, for a time, an earthly omnipotence, but all stood firm. There was doubt previous to the declaration—none after. Every name shone brighter as the darkness thickened. Each patriot was a sun that stood fast—until the battle of independence had been fought and won.

The Declaration of Independence was first publicly proclaimed in Portsmouth from the steps of the old State House on July 18, 1776. This State House then stood on Market Square and faced King Street and at the conclusion of the reading, by acclamation of the people present, the name of the street was changed to Congress Street. Local historians claim that these steps are now the very same used at the entrance of the Daniel Webster house on Vaughan Street, whence they were removed when the old State House was dismembered in 1837.

The signing of the declaration is regarded by all Americans as the greatest material act of all time. By the world at large it is regarded as one of the few great events of history. And this brings me to my particular text today, Gen. William Whipple

of Portsmouth for whom this schoolhouse is named and in whose honor this tablet is today unveiled and to venerate the memory of whom we are here today gathered together.

He was born across the river in the township of Kittery in 1730, and died in Portsmouth in 1785. His span of life was, therefore, but fifty-five years. Take from that period the twenty-nine years of youth and time spent at sea, and you have left the twenty-five years into which he crowded more action, devotion and self-sacrifice for the general welfare, than is commonly allotted to mortals, and more than could be in the case of any man who had less of versatility, industry capacity and righteousness. After a common school education he went to sea in a lowly capacity, yet at the age of twenty-nine, when he abandoned the sea as a profession, he had risen to the rank of master or captain and had sailed all the known seas.

At the age of thirty he is found in business with his brother in Portsmouth, and this business they conducted successfully and without interruption until 1774 at which time William Whipple then being forty-four years of age, saw clearly a conflict over the separation and independence of the colonies was not far off.

General Whipple lost no time in espousing the patriot cause. In January, 1775, we find him

elected by the people of Portsmouth to the Provincial Assembly or General Court to be held at Exeter. In May, 1775, we find him made a member of the Provincial Committee of Safety.

Later in the same year we find him a member of the Committee of Safety of the town of Portsmouth.

When the New Hampshire provincial form of government was changed late in 1775 to a house of representatives and a council of twelve we find him in January, 1776, elected as one of the councillors. On January 23, 1776, he was elected a delegate or representative from New Hampshire to the Congress or Federal Assembly to be held at Philadelphia and on February 29th of the same year he took his seat there.

He was reëlected to the same position in 1777, 1778 and 1779 at the end of which term of service he retired because of physical disabilities.

You might well suppose that the duties of the Federal Congress during those four years would tax the endurance and fully occupy the time of the members to the exclusion of all other duties whether they were personal or local. But what was the fact as to General Whipple?

In 1777 Burgoyne's invasion was in process. Ticonderoga had fallen. The British army composed of English veterans, hired auxiliaries, Tories and Indians, was forcing its way down the

Hudson Valley. The British troops from New York City were marching up the same valley to effect a junction with the invading army. New England was in serious danger of being completely and for all time cut off from all communication with, and help from the other colonies. The federated colonies were about to be cut into two pieces, neither of which, alone, could successfully continue the struggle, and each of which would fall a prey to the hostile armies of Britain. Burgoyne's invasion must be stopped. Burgoyne's army must be crushed, overpowered, captured, before it could be joined by the British troops from New York. The fate of the Declaration of Independence depended upon it. The fate of the struggle of your forefathers for their independence depended upon it. In the balance depended your existence today, and mine, and your descendants and mine. On it depended the light of the torch of liberty. On it depended the birth and stability of republican institutions. On the one hand was success, freedom, life; on the other, slavery, misery, poverty, ignominious death.

General Whipple saw these things. His vision was clear as to the momentousness of the issue. Did he sit in his seat in Congress in Philadephia? No. He hastened home to Portsmouth, our Portsmouth. New Hampshire raised two bri-

gades of troops with several regiments in each. General Stark was placed in command of one, and General Whipple was placed in command of the other. What General Stark did with his command at Bennington is known to you all. He destroyed a material part of the Burgoyne army there, and placed the first great obstacle in the way of a British retreat or advance.

General Whipple placed himself and his brigade with the American troops at Saratoga, and he himself took a commanding part in the final events leading up to the surrender of Burgoyne—justly regarded as one of the seven great events in the world's history.

We find him delegated to conduct in behalf of America the delicate negotiations looking to the surrender. We find him successful in that great task. And after the surrender, we find him commissioned to conduct the captive troops to Boston harbor. This also was successfully done. Immediately thereafter, we find him again attending to his duties as a member of the Congress at Philadelphia, but when the Rhode Island campaign seemed to need the warrior more than the nation seemed to need the statesman, we find him there, in 1778, leading the New Hampshire troops in the army commanded by General Sullivan. At the conclusion of this campaign we find him again at his post in the Congress at Philadelphia, and there

he remained as long as his health would permit.

What wonder, then, that physical infirmities overcame him, so much so that he was compelled to retire from such a strenuous life? He was at home in Portsmouth in 1780, where he declined the federal appointment of commissioner of admiralty. We find him a member of the New Hampshire legislature from 1780 to 1784. Furthermore, he reluctantly accepted and held from 1782 to 1784 the position of receiver of the United States for New Hampshire, a position troublesome, and most difficult to fill, carrying with it as it did, the necessity of collecting local moneys for the federal government at a time when obtaining money from the colonists for any purpose, was almost an impossibility, because they had so little.

But this was not the sum of his public duties at this time. The Congress appointed him president of a federal court to try a dispute between the states of Connecticut and Pennsylvania, and this duty he performed.

And as if his life was not already full of honors and duties, in 1782 he was appointed to, and accepted a judgeship of, the superior court of judicature and held the position until his death.

When the declaration was presented to the Congress at Philadelphia for signatures of the

delegates, the northernmost colony was called first, and Josiah Bartlett of our neighboring town of Kingston was the first name called, who voted in its favor, and William Whipple of Portsmouth was the second who voted aye, and his signature is the sixth among the signers.

Consider this life of activity, of versatility, of honesty, of patriotism, of unselfishness. Take inspiration from it. Pattern after it. Visit the house here in which he lived, standing as it does nobly and grandly. Walk under the great tree which his hand planted, and which today flourishes and is in full life and vigor as you would expect of all things that sprang from him.

What wonder is it that the society which springs from the loins of those who fought in the wars in which he fought; which descended from the men who fought and bled in the conflicts which his statesmanship on the one hand, and his military leadership on the other, helped guide, rejoices today in the opportunity to grace his memory with this tablet? All glory to him! All praise to them! William Whipple! Rare is the human, worthy to deal fittingly with that name and its possessor! I recognize my own inability to properly and briefly deal with such a proud possession of your native city and my own. And above all he was and did, his memory by all Americans will be chiefly cherished because he

was one of the *SIGNERS*, one of the immortal fifty-six who placed their names to that which is the beginning and the foundation of all this country is and may be; of all we are and may be.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires, that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident:—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . .

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world, for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; . . . and that, as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.

And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

This paper may be closed in no more fitting way than by quoting from one of our greatest statesmen, who in eulogy of the signers said:

They are no more, they are dead. But how little is there of the great and good which can die! To their country they yet live, and live forever. They live in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth: in the recorded proofs of their own great actions, in the offspring of their intellect, in the deep engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. They live in their example; and they live, emphatically, and will live, in the influence which their lives and efforts, their principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, on the affairs of men, not only in their own country, but throughout the civilized world. A superior and commanding human intellect, a truly great man, when Heaven vouchsafes so rare a gift, is not a temporary flame, burning bright for a while, and then expiring, giving place to returning darkness. It is rather a spark of fervent heat, as well as radiant light, with power to enkindle the common mass of human mind; so that when it glimmers in its own decay, and finally goes out in death, no night follows; but it leaves the world all light, all on fire, from the potent contact of its own spirit.

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